

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested. The following remarks are responsive to the Office Action of August 20, 2003. Claims 17-20 remain in the application. As discussed in a phone interview with Examiner Brian Mutschler on November 13, 2003, Claim 17 has been amended to more precisely recite the tilting of the wafer to allow for a compliant engagement of the wafer and the sleeve. The above amendments are supported by the Specification as filed. Accordingly, no new matter is added.

The claims have been rejected as obvious over Tamaki et al. U.S. Patent No. 5,853,559 (Tamaki) in view of Getchel et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,019,164 (Getchel). Although Tamaki discusses a similar method and apparatus for processing semiconductor wafers, wherein the wafer forms the floor of the apparatus, the addition of Getchel fails to teach or suggest the preventing or reducing leakage of the processing fluid by tilting of the wafer to allow for a compliant engagement of the wafer and the sleeve. Getchel discloses a device that will maintain the height and planar orientation of the top surface during thermal expansion through the use of hardened spherical balls and hardened pads. Getchel makes clear that this configuration maintains the chuck at a constant height through thermal changes by using offsetting thermal expansions. The o-rings referred to in Getchel provide a vacuum seal but do not provide any flexibility in the coupling between the chuck components as recited in the present claims. In addition, Getchel specifically discusses the use of three support members to provide stability to the chuck to prevent tilting of the upper portion of the chuck. In contrast, the present claims recite an upper body coupled to the base by a flexible coupling that allows for the upper body to tilt relative to the base. Therefore, the claims are patentable over Tamaki in view of Getchel.

For all of the foregoing reasons, the claims are patentable over the references cited in the Office Action. If there are any additional fees due in connection with this communication, please charge our deposit account no. 02-2666.

Respectfully submitted,

BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & ZAFMAN LLP

Tarek N. Fahmi
Reg. No. 41,402

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12400 Wilshire Boulevard
Seventh Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90025-1026
(408) 947-8200